

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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Carnell Davis, #179330,

Petitioner,

vs.

Warden, Lieber Correctional Institution,

Respondent.

) C/A No.: 9:07-cv-03318-HMH-GCK
) DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA
) CHARLESTON, SC) Report and Recommendation
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Petitioner, who is proceeding *pro se*, has filed this matter pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254. He is presently incarcerated at Evans Correctional Institution where he is serving a life sentence for murder and twenty (20) years consecutive for assault and battery with intent to kill. Petitioner pleaded guilty to these charges on July 19, 1991. He did not appeal his convictions or sentences.

Petitioner filed his first application for post-conviction relief (PCR) on March 2, 1992 which was dismissed with prejudice. Petitioner did not file an appeal from this Order. Petitioner filed a second application for PCR on October 23, 1995. The PCR Judge granted the petitioner a belated appeal pursuant to *Austin v. State*, 490 S.E.2d 395 (S.C. 1991), however the petitioner failed to file his appeal.

Petitioner subsequently filed a petition for writ of habeas corpus in this Court on June 17, 2004. The respondents timely filed a Motion for Summary Judgment and a memorandum in support, and petitioner filed his reply. The Motion for Summary Judgment was granted because the petition for the writ was untimely, and because petitioner had not exhausted his state remedies.

Petitioner filed a third application for PCR on May 6, 2005 which was also dismissed. Petitioner did not appeal the denial of his third PCR application. This petition for writ of habeas

corpus followed.

Under established local procedure in this judicial district, a careful review has been made of the *pro se* petition pursuant to the procedural provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1915, 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, and the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996. The review has been conducted in light of the following precedents: *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 60 U.S.L.W. 4346, 118 L.Ed.2d 340, 112 S.Ct. 1728, (1992); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 324-325, (1989); *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519 (1972); and *Nasim v. Warden, Maryland House of Correction*, 64 F.3d 951, (1995); *Todd v. Baskerville*, 712 F.2d 70 (4th Cir. 1983). This court is required to construe *pro se* petitions liberally. Such *pro se* petitions are held to a less stringent standard than those drafted by attorneys, *Gordon v. Leeke*, 574 F.2d 1147, 1151 (4th Cir. 1978), and a federal district court is charged with liberally construing a petition filed by a *pro se* litigant to allow the development of a potentially meritorious case. *See Hughes v. Rowe*, 449 U.S. 5, 9 (1980); and *Cruz v. Beto*, 405 U.S. 319 (1972). When a federal court is evaluating a *pro se* petition the plaintiff's allegations are assumed to be true. *Fine v. City of New York*, 529 F.2d 70, 74 (2nd Cir. 1975). However, even under this less stringent standard, the petition submitted in the above-captioned case is subject to summary dismissal. The requirement of liberal construction does not mean that the court can ignore a clear failure in the pleading to allege facts which set forth a claim currently cognizable in a federal district court. *Weller v. Department of Social Services*, 901 F.2d 387, (4th Cir. 1990).

The time in which a state prisoner may seek relief from a state court conviction through a petition for writ of habeas corpus is determined by Congress: "A 1-year period of limitation shall apply to an application for a writ of habeas corpus by a person in custody pursuant to the judgement of a State court." 28 U.S.C.A. § 2244(d)(1). There are four time periods from which the one-year period can begin to run. The time period is calculated from the latest of:

(1) the date on which the judgement became final by the conclusion of direct review or the expiration of the time for seeking such review;

(2) the date on which the impediment to filing an application created by State action in violation of the Constitution or laws of the United States is removed, if the applicant was prevented from filing by such State action;

(3) the date on which the constitutional right asserted was initially recognized by the Supreme Court, if the right has been newly recognized by the Supreme Court and made retroactively applicable to cases on collateral review; or

(4) the date on which the factual predicate of the claim or claims presented could have been discovered through the exercise of due diligence.

28 U.S.C.A. §2244(d)(1).

Consequently, the earliest the one-year period would begin to run is when direct review of the state conviction is through or when the time to seek direct review has elapsed. 28 U.S.C.A. § 2244(d)(1)(A). If no petition for review is filed with the Supreme Court of the United States, the limitations period begins to run again when the time for filing a petition for review with the United States Supreme Court would expire - ninety (90) days. *See Harris v. Hutchinson*, 209 F. 3d 325, 328 n.1 (4th Cir. 2000).


The time period can be tolled, however, for “[t]he time during which a properly filed application for State post-conviction relief or other collateral review with respect to the pertinent judgment or claim is pending” 28 U.S.C.A. § 2244(d)(2). The one-year period may also be equitably tolled in rare circumstances. *See Harris*, 209 F.3d @ 330.

In the instant case, petitioner is clearly barred by the statute of limitations. While it is true that the one-year period set out in 28 U.S.C.A. § 2244(d) is usually an affirmative defense that the State bears the burden of asserting,¹ a federal court may raise the defense *sua sponte* if “it is

¹ *See Acosta v. Artuz*, 221 F.3d 117, 121-22 (2nd Cir. 2000); *Kiser v. Johnson*, 163 F.3d 326, 328 & n.4 (5th Cir. 1999).

indisputably clear from the materials presented to the [D]istrict [C]ourt that the petition is untimely ...". See *Hill v. Braxton*, 277 F.3d 701 (4th Cir. 2002). As noted above, the petitioner already sought a petition for writ of habeas corpus in 2004. In that matter, defendants motion for summary judgment was granted, *inter alia*, because the petition was untimely. This court may take judicial notice of the petitioner's prior § 2254 case. See *Aloe Creme Laboratories, Inc. v. Francine Co.*, 425 F.2d 1295, 1296 (5th Cir. 1970).

Additionally, since summary judgment for the respondents was granted in the petitioner's prior § 2254 case, the above-captioned case is subject to dismissal under Rule 9 of the Section 2254 Rules. *Miller v. Bordenkircher*, 764 F.2d 245, 248-250 & nn. 3-5 (4th Cir. 1985). See also *McClesky v. Zant*, 499 U.S. 467, 113 L.Ed.2d 517, 111 S.Ct. 1454, 1467-1472 (1991); Section 106 of the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, Public Law 104-132, 110 U.S.Stat. 1214; *Bennett v. Angelone*, 92 F.3d 1336 (4th Cir. 1996) *cert denied*, 519 U.S. 1002, 136 L.Ed.2d 395, 117 S.Ct. 503 (1996); and *Armstead v. Parke*, 930 F. Supp. 1285 (N.D.Ind. 1996).




Furthermore, there is no indication that the petitioner has sought leave from the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit to file the § 2254 petition in the above-captioned case. Leave from the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit is now required under the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 for filers of successive or second § 2254 petitions. Before the petitioner attempts to file another petition in the United States District Court for the District of South Carolina, he *must* seek and obtain leave (*i.e.*, written permission) from the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. The petitioner can obtain the necessary forms for doing so from the Clerk's Office of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in

Richmond, Virginia.**

Finally, the petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 in the above-captioned case should be dismissed because the petitioner has not exhausted his state remedies. A writ of habeas corpus can be sought only after the petitioner has exhausted his state court remedies. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2254(b); *Picard v. Connor*, 404 U.S. 270 (1971); *Braden v. 30th Judicial Circuit Court*, 410 U.S. 484, 490-491 (1973)(exhaustion also required under 28 U.S.C. § 2241); and *Moore v. De Young*, 515 F.2d 437, 442-443 (3rd Cir. 1975)(exhaustion required under 28 U.S.C. § 2241).

The petitioner has filed three applications for post conviction relief but has never appealed the denial

 **See Section 106 of the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996:

(B) LIMITS ON SECOND OR SUCCESSIVE APPLICATIONS. —Section 2244(b) of title 28, UNITED STATES CODE, is amended to read as follows:

"(B)(1) A claim presented in a second or successive habeas corpus application under section 2254 that was presented in a prior application shall be dismissed.

"(2) A claim presented in a second or successive habeas corpus application under section 2254 that was not presented in a prior application shall be dismissed unless—

"(A) the applicant shows that the claim relies on a new rule of constitutional law, made retroactive to cases on collateral review by the Supreme Court, that was previously unavailable; or

"(B)(i) the factual predicate for the claim could not have been discovered previously through the exercise of due diligence; and

"(ii) the facts underlying the claim, if proven and viewed in light of the evidence as a whole, would be sufficient to establish by clear and convincing evidence that, but for constitutional error, no reasonable factfinder would have found the applicant guilty of the underlying offense.

"(3)(A) Before a second or successive application permitted by this section is filed in the district court, the applicant shall move in the appropriate court of appeals for an order authorizing the district court to consider the application.

"(B) A motion in the court of appeals for an order authorizing the district court to consider a second or successive application shall be determined by a three-judge panel of the court of appeals.

"(C) The court of appeals may authorize the filing of a second or successive application only if it determines that the application makes a prima facie showing that the application satisfies the requirements of this subsection.

"(D) The court of appeals shall grant or deny the authorization to file a second or successive application not later than 30 days after the filing of the motion.

"(E) The grant or denial of an authorization by a court of appeals to file a second or successive application shall not be appealable and shall not be the subject of a petition for rehearing or for a writ of certiorari.

"(4) A district court shall dismiss any claim presented in a second or successive application that the court of appeals has authorized to be filed unless the applicant shows that the claim satisfies the requirements of this section."

of any one of the three applications. As a result, the grounds raised in the § 2254 petition have not been considered and addressed by courts of the State of South Carolina.

If a South Carolina prisoner's application for post-conviction relief is denied or dismissed by a Court of Common Pleas, he or she can file an appeal in that post-conviction case. *See* § 17-27-100, South Carolina Code of Laws; and *Knight v. State*, 284 S.C. 138, 325 S.E.2d 535 (1985). In fact, if the petitioner files an application for post-conviction relief and the Court of Common Pleas for Spartanburg County denies post-conviction relief or dismisses the petitioner's application for post-conviction relief, the petitioner must seek appellate review by the Supreme Court of South Carolina of that disposition from the Court of Common Pleas for Spartanburg County, or federal collateral review of the grounds raised in his application for post-conviction relief will be barred by a procedural default. *See Whitley v. Bair*, 802 F.2d 1487, 1500 & n. 27 (4th Cir. 1986), *cert. denied*, 480 U.S. 951 (1987); *Mason v. Proconier*, 748 F.2d 852, 853-854 (4th Cir. 1984), *cert. denied*, *Mason v. Sielaff*, 471 U.S. 1009 (1985); and *Strader v. Allsbrook*, 656 F.2d 67, 68 (4th Cir. 1981).

The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit has held that South Carolina's Uniform Post-Conviction Procedure Act, which is currently codified at § 17-27-10 *et seq.*, South Carolina Code of Laws, is a viable state-court remedy. *See Miller v. Harvey*, 566 F.2d 879, 880-881 (4th Cir. 1977), *cert. denied*, 439 U.S. 838 (1978); and *Patterson v. Leeke*, 556 F.2d 1168, 1170-1173 & n. 1 (4th Cir.), *cert. denied*, 434 U.S. 929 (1977).


Since the petitioner has a viable state court remedy which has not been fully utilized, the United States District Court for the District of South Carolina should not keep this case on its docket while the petitioner is exhausting his state remedies. *See Galloway v. Stephenson*, 510 F. Supp. 840, 846 (M.D.N.C. 1981): "When state court remedies have not been exhausted, absent special circumstances, a federal habeas court may not retain the case on its docket, pending exhaustion, but

should dismiss the petition." *See also Pitchess v. Davis*, 421 U.S. 482, 490 (1975); and *Lawson v. Dixon*, 3 F.3d 743, 749 n. 4, (4th Cir. 1993), *cert. denied*, 510 U.S. 1171, (1994), where the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit noted: "[E]xhaustion is not a jurisdictional requirement, but rather arises from interests of comity between the state and federal courts."

RECOMMENDATION

Accordingly, it is recommended that the § 2254 petition in the above-captioned case be dismissed *without prejudice* and without requiring the respondents to file a return. *See Allen v. Perini*, 424 F.2d 134, 141 (6th Cir. 1970)(federal district courts have duty to screen habeas corpus petitions and eliminate burden placed on respondents caused by ordering an unnecessary answer or return), *cert. denied*, 400 U.S. 906 (1970); and the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996.

November 19, 2007
Charleston, South Carolina


George C. Kosko
United States Magistrate Judge

The petitioner's attention is directed to the important notice on the next page.

Notice of Right to File Objections to Report and Recommendation

The parties are advised that they may file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation with the District Court Judge. Objections must specifically identify the portions of the Report and Recommendation to which objections are made and the basis for such objections. In the absence of a timely filed objection, a district court judge need not conduct a de novo review, but instead must "only satisfy itself that there is no clear error on the face of the record in order to accept the recommendation." *Diamond v. Colonial Life & Acc. Ins. Co.*, 416 F.3d 310 (4th Cir. 2005).

Specific written objections must be filed within ten (10) days of the date of service of this Report and Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b). The time calculation of this ten-day period excludes weekends and holidays and provides for an additional three (3) days for filing by mail. Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(a) & (e). Filing by mail pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 5 may be accomplished by mailing objections to:

Larry W. Propes, Clerk
United States District Court
P.O. Box 835
Charleston, South Carolina 29402

Failure to timely file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation will result in waiver of the right to appeal from a judgment of the District Court based upon such Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); *Thomas v. Arn*, 474 U.S. 140 (1985); *United States v. Schronce*, 727 F.2d 91 (4th Cir. 1984); *Wright v. Collins*, 766 F.2d 841 (4th Cir. 1985).